

Covering for Management

by Eleanor Friedman

LANCASTER, Pa., Sept. 20 — NUWRO dented the Federal government's use of the postal unions as a buffer against hard-pressed postal workers at the National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC) statewide convention which ended here today.

At the convention the NALC cooperated with the government's plan to prevent discussion of slave labor in the post office by barring NUWRO from speaking. On Sept. 18, the day before the convention was to open, Philadelphia Branch 157 had hurriedly suspended Don Taylor, NUWRO organizer and shop steward, in order to keep him from attending. This was done under heavy pressure from management.

To ensure that the membership would accept Taylor's suspension, the Branch 157 leadership had denied Taylor the right to speak and had harassed a 85-member NUWRO picket line with 10 plainclothes and uniformed Civil Disobedience ("red squad") police, armed with two police cars, a paddy wagon, and a vicious killer police dog.

Slave Labor Avoided

Continuing this policy, the state union tried unsuccessfully on two separate occasions to have eight NUWRO leafleters removed from the convention here. The second attempt was blocked by Wilkesbury, Pa. carriers, who insisted on hearing what the socialists had to say.

Except for NUWRO's intervention, the convention was like all other labor conventions today — a drunken party for the delegates and a show for the rank and file. The substantive issues — the layoffs, forced work and speedup allowed for in the two-year postal contract ratified in July — were never brought to the convention floor.

The one exception was the use of part-time, non-union employees to replace unionized postal workers.

passed a resolution calling on the Postal Service to give postal workers' own children preferential hiring in this category!

While the union delegates were passing such resolutions, the Postal Service was stepping up its implementation of slave labor across the country. WIN (Work Incentive program) recipients, 89-day casuals and students continue to fill formerly unionized jobs. Speedup is rampant: In Madison, Wis., many workers must put in 45 to 48 hours a week; in San Francisco, a postal worker died of a heart attack three weeks ago due to what were described as "slavedriver" conditions.

CIA On Another Task

So far NUWRO has been the only organization to discuss these issues and offer a strategic perspective for dealing with them. Many of the delegates, who must answer to the men in the locals, took time out from the proceedings here to talk with the NUWRO representatives.

Like delegates to the weeklong August convention of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), postal unionists admitted that union conventions are now no more than social gatherings; the political questions having been previously decided in back rooms.

Meanwhile, the government's other drive against NUWRO in the union — the Tax Equity of America (TEA) Party's counter-organizing under the direction of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) — seems to have faltered. The TEA Party leader Ed Schwartz didn't make an appearance at the convention, probably fearing further exposure and humiliation of the sort given him the week before when NUWRO organizers took over one of his meetings.

For the moment the TEA Party is playing down its infiltration of the postal unions, while building up its pursuit of NUWRO into the Pennsylvania Social Service Union (PSSU). The caseworkers' union ended its first constitutional convention on Sept. 17 by passing a resolution against slave labor — to offset NUWRO's influence — and a resolution in favor of the TEA Party — to